

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) announced \$32,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding Tuesday that will be used to restore 178 acres of grassland habitat and benefit wildlife in the Chihuahuan Desert of far West Texas. The funding will benefit a partnership announced in late July between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute in Fort Davis, which will contribute an additional \$10,000 to the project.

“These funds will help preserve the environmental legacy of the Chihuahuan Desert region, which is so rich in natural resources and diversity,” said Congressman Rodriguez. “We’re lucky to have this gem in the 23rd Congressional District and I applaud the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute for partnering to protect it.”

The Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI) promotes public awareness of the Chihuahuan Desert region and its diverse ecosystem and encourages conservation and sustainable development. In addition to the restoration, the money will also fund an education exhibit.

Executive Director Cathryn Hoyt said the Institute is pleased to have received funding for the *grassland restoration project*.

“The grasslands are an extremely important part of the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem and are a key to grassland bird conservation,” Hoyt said. “Our project is small, but we hope that it will serve as an inspiring example for landowners throughout the northern Chihuahuan Desert.”

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More than 90 percent of all North American grassland-dependent birds use the Chihuahuan Desert grasslands at some point, either as year-round habitat for breeding, or as a wintering site, Hoyt said. Sadly, annual Breeding Bird surveys indicate that these grassland birds are declining at a rapid rate due to habitat loss.

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Congressman Rodriguez is committed to preserving the natural environment. On September 22, he filed HR 3629, the Healthy Borderlands Act, which directs the Department of Homeland Security to develop a plan to mitigate the ecological impacts of fencing along the border.

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